AB 2016 (Alejo):
Ethnic Studies for All
As amended in Assembly Committee: May 20, 2016
Last updated: May 27, 2016

PURPOSE OF THE BILL

Under existing law, the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) develops and recommends curriculum frameworks to the State Board of Education (SBE).

This bill will allow California school districts or charter schools to immediately implement an Ethnic Studies model curriculum that is developed by IQC to all grades 9 to 12 as an elective for social sciences or English language arts.

PROBLEM & NEED FOR THE BILL

California has one of the largest and most diverse student populations in the nation. Ethnic minorities account for over 71 percent of the student population, with more than 90 languages spoken in the state’s schools.

Given California’s annual increase in its population’s diversity, it is especially important that students gain knowledge of the various racial and ethnic groups in our state. Expanding the high school curriculum to include ethnic studies will help students relate to historical events and have a better understanding of their own history and history of other neighbors. Learning of the historic struggles for equality will better teach students what it really means to be an American.

The National Education Association confirms that ethnic studies have a positive impact on students of color. The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies reports that ethnic studies benefited students in observable ways: they became more academically engaged, increased outcomes on academic tests, improved graduation rates, and developed a sense of self-efficacy and personal empowerment.

Developing ethnic studies programs in public high schools is an integral part of cultivating a classroom environment that is accepting of diverse cultures. It is vital for young people to learn about their history, but also important for them to feel like they can change their communities in positive ways.

In 2014, IQC began its review of the draft the Social Sciences framework. On the completion and adoption of the framework, California school districts will have the option of purchasing the Ethnic Studies framework for grade 9. However, that framework is not substantial enough for school districts and charter schools to readily implement a curriculum for instructional use.

A fully developed ethnic studies curriculum will help close the achievement gap by reducing student truancy, increasing student enrollment, reduce drop-out rates, and better prepare Californian youth to be college prepared and career ready.

WHAT THIS BILL WOULD DO

AB 2016 instructs the IQC to develop an Ethnic Studies model curriculum beginning of June 30, 2019 and for the state board to adopt it by November 30, 2019.

After the development of the model curriculum, each school district or charter school would have an option to offer a course of study in ethnic studies to their students as an elective for grades 9 to 12.

BILL STATUS

Approved by Assembly Appropriation Committee (Ayes14 Noes 1) (May 27).

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